

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
THE BIOLOGICAL LABORATORIES
16 DIVINITY AVENUE
CAMBRIDGE 38, MASSACHUSETTS

March 8, 1957

Professor Joshua Lederberg
c/o Ciba Foundation
41 Portland Place
London W. 1

Dear Joshua:

I am of course one of those who are delighted with the realization that Harvard is about to make you an offer and hope very much that you may take it. You know that it had been my hope that something of this kind happen years ago, at the time I talked with you about it. I probably should have said something to you about what went on at that time, and I should like now to tell you a little about it, with the thought that it might clarify a situation which must still seem obscure to you.

What had happened is that President Conant had invited nominations from our Department for one or more special professorships that would have been supported outside the regular departmental budget. The call was for one or more persons of highest distinction, and a departmental committee was appointed to look into this. Kenneth and I were very anxious that you be considered in this connection, and it was then that we talked with you to find out whether you would be interested. I can only tell you that this whole business never got anywhere. Our departmental committee made certain proposals to Mr. Conant that never went to a successful conclusion. The whole business died not with a bang but with a whimper; with Mr. Conant finally saying that he would look into the possibility of such appointments on his own. No such appointment was in fact ever made. I had gone on a Sigma Xi tour to the Southwest in this period and took the opportunity to interview a number of persons, specifically asking about you, in order to provide the material that might have been used in considering you for an appointment. When I got back to Harvard, this was all in the unsatisfactory state I have described. There was really nothing I could write you, because the business had neither got anywhere nor had it been terminated. It was just left hanging. What I in fact did was to write all my thoughts and all the information I had ob-

tained about you in a letter to the Provost, and with this the whole business ended.

The next development took a quite different form. It was the necessity for the Department to make an appointment in genetics at a junior level out of its regular teaching budget. It was this that led to the appointment of Paul Levine.

I have explained all this to you because I realize now that, since you were told nothing more, you may have supposed all sorts of things other than what actually occurred. I am very happy that now, in a quite extraordinary way, this whole business has been reactivated, and that under the auspices of a new administration. The letter that I mention above also was brought out of storage, and everything seems finally to be in the clear -- at least at our end. All of us here will be delighted if you decide to come to Harvard, and I hope that is what you will do.

With all regards and good wishes.

Sincerely,


George Wald

GW:b